

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 52, nays 40, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 53 Ex.]

YEAS—52

Baldwin	Hickenlooper	Schatz
Bennet	Hirono	Schumer
Blumenthal	Kaine	Shaheen
Booker	Kelly	Sinema
Brown	King	Smith
Cantwell	Klobuchar	Stabenow
Cardin	Lujan	Tester
Carper	Markey	Tillis
Casey	Menendez	Van Hollen
Collins	Merkley	Warner
Coons	Murkowski	Warnock
Cortez Masto	Murphy	Warren
Duckworth	Murray	Welch
Durbin	Ossoff	Whitehouse
Gillibrand	Peters	Wyden
Grassley	Reed	Young
Hassan	Rosen	
Heinrich	Sanders	

NAYS—40

Blackburn	Graham	Paul
Boozman	Hagerty	Ricketts
Braun	Hawley	Romney
Britt	Hoehen	Rounds
Budd	Hyde-Smith	Rubio
Capito	Johnson	Schmitt
Cassidy	Kennedy	Scott (FL)
Cornyn	Lankford	Sullivan
Cotton	Lee	Thune
Cramer	Lummis	Tuberville
Crapo	Manchin	Vance
Daines	Marshall	Wicker
Ernst	Moran	
Fischer	Mullin	

NOT VOTING—8

Barrasso	Fetterman	Risch
Cruz	McConnell	Scott (SC)
Feinstein	Padilla	

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. WARNOCK). On this vote, the yeas are 52, the nays are 40.

The motion is agreed to.

PRO ACT

Mr. PETERS. Mr. President, a little over a decade ago, Michigan lawmakers convened a session in the dark of the night. They put padlocks on the doors of the State Capitol so that they wouldn't have to listen to the protesters who had gathered outside.

They had come to Lansing to pass "right to work," a policy that weakened the power of unions all across Michigan. But today—today—my colleagues in the State legislature passed legislation in the State senate to repeal that law, and it now moves to the house next week.

They are stepping up. They are stepping up because they understand that we are living through a crucial moment. The richest Americans are only getting richer, while many working people are left behind, unable to reap the benefits of the wealth that they helped to create.

Labor unions are the best tool that we have to buck that trend. They expand and empower the middle class. They allow workers to negotiate for better wages and safer workplaces and the right to retire with dignity. But union membership is at an alltime low. Many employers intimidate workers who attempt to organize and retaliate against those who are able to come together. It is one reason that the gap between rich and poor continues to grow.

In order to keep building an economy that works for everyone, we need to

take a lesson from my home State of Michigan. We need to breathe new life into American unions, and we need to pass the PRO Act. This legislation will empower workers to exercise their right to organize. It will hold employers accountable for violating workers' rights. It will secure free, fair, and safe union elections, and it will preempt right-to-work laws across the country. Simply put, the PRO Act will make it easier for working people everywhere to join a union.

As a Michigander, the right to organize is a pillar of my State. Modern unions were born in Flint, MI, when autoworkers banded together in the winter of 1936 for better pay and working conditions. Their 44-day strike started a movement that formed the backbone of the American middle class.

But this is also very personal to me. My dad was a teacher and a member of the MEA. My father-in-law is a proud member of UAW Local 5960 as a retiree. My mother, a nurse's aide, worked tirelessly with the SEIU to organize her workplace. And when management tried to sway her to not support the union with a raise, she refused. She would not quit. She would not stop her fight until everyone got a better deal and everyone got a raise. And after the employees voted to unionize, they made her a union steward. She taught me the value of standing up and fighting for your rights, no matter what is in your way.

We have seen what is possible when we choose to stand up for working people. We enacted the bipartisan infrastructure deal, which will create good-paying union jobs all across our country and penalize companies that break the labor law. Just over 2 years ago, we passed the Butch Lewis Act and secured pensions for millions of American workers.

These victories have helped people all across our country, and we can build on that work by passing the PRO Act. It is a comprehensive, common-sense piece of legislation that we have to get across the finish line. The name-sake of this bill is former AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka, a legend in the labor movement and a tireless advocate for working people.

Just before he died, he addressed a group of Alabama coal miners who were in the throes of a strike, and he told them: We are not going to give up. We are not going to give in. We will prevail. One day longer, one day stronger.

His words ring as true today as they did that night in Brookwood, AL. We are not giving in or giving up, and together we will prevail. I am proud to stand in solidarity with labor unions all across Michigan, as well as all across this country, as a cosponsor of the PRO Act, and I will continue to do everything in my power to see that it gets passed.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan.

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. PETERS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that notwithstanding rule XXII, the Senate consider the following nomination: Calendar No. 67, Michael Ratney, to be Ambassador to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia; that the Senate vote on the nomination, without intervening action or debate; that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon table and the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The clerk will report the nomination.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Michael Alan Ratney, of Massachusetts, a Career Member of the Senior Foreign Service, Class of Minister-Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Thereupon, the Senate proceeded to consider the nomination.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Ratney nomination?

The nomination was confirmed.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. PETERS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to legislative session and be in a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

SUNSHINE WEEK

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I come to the floor today to commemorate Sunshine Week. Sunshine Week coincides each year with March 16, one of our Founding Fathers' birthdays: James Madison. Madison is widely known as the father of open government.

The sunshine I am talking about isn't the kind that helps the corn grow in Iowa. Sunshine Week is dedicated to promoting government accountability to the source from which all government derives its power: the people. Before joining the Supreme Court in 1916, Justice Louis Brandeis wrote: "Sunlight is said to be the best of disinfectants: electric light the most efficient policeman." As a longtime champion for an open, accessible government, I speak today in support of those enduring principles.

In great works of literature, readers often remember a novel's opening line even if they forget the rest. When one hears that line, it immediately calls to mind the entire book. Well the same is true of our Constitution, a document that both defines the powers of the

Federal Government and, at the same time, carefully limits those powers.

"We The People." These are not the opening words of a novel, but they are just as memorable as the best opening lines in literature. These solemn words form the opening line of our framework of our government, the Constitution.

This is not an accident. Our Founders and Framers made a conscious choice to open our sacred charter by calling to mind the source of all government powers, from local school boards to the deliberations of this Chamber: the people of our United States, as James Madison said, acting in their sovereign capacity. These are truths we must repeat often, so that we never forget them. The people in this framework are in control. To use the analogy of the sun, whatever promotes self-governance, spoken of in our Declaration of Independence, is sunshine. Whatever hinders the people in their right to govern their communities is darkness.

As the Federal Government has grown in size and scope, all too often bureaucrats prefer to live in the shadows of the bureaucracy. They forget that they are ultimately accountable to the people. Because of this, Congress has passed a series of laws requiring openness and accountability to citizens and taxpayers. Just like we need information from government agencies to decide how to cast many of our votes in Congress, so too do the American people need this information to fulfill their role, and to cast theirs.

This week is meant to draw attention to this need for openness, especially the Freedom of Information Act, which requires government Agencies to produce documents enlightening citizens as to what Agencies are doing. There is also the inherent constitutional power that Members of Congress have to conduct oversight and launch investigations.

Despite this framework of laws and the bedrock principles of our Constitution, Agencies day in and day out fight tooth and nail so they won't have to turn over records when people file Freedom of Information Act requests and even when Members of Congress make requests for information. The Freedom of Information Act is a key law for providing transparency in government. Exemptions that allow records to be withheld should only be used when necessary and not as an excuse to withhold potentially embarrassing information. Federal Agencies must also reverse the trend of ever-increasing FOIA backlogs.

For example, according to annual FOIA reports, the Department of Homeland Security saw its FOIA backlog double at the end of fiscal year 2022 from the previous fiscal year. They are not alone. The Justice Department, Defense Department, and State Department all saw increases in their FOIA backlogs from the prior year. Federal Agencies need to do better.

I continue to work for laws that strengthen the Freedom of Information

Act and other measures that will ensure the people's business is conducted in public, not in private. I am planning to reintroduce a bipartisan bill to ensure FOIA remains a useful public tool and to push back against recent case law that erodes greater transparency. This bill will restore pro-transparency principles and will make it crystal clear where Congress stands on the public's right to know what our government is doing.

To mark "Sunshine Week," I am also introducing the bipartisan Sunshine in the Courtroom Act, which would permit and encourage all Federal courts to welcome cameras into the courtroom. I am also cosponsoring, with Senator DURBIN, a companion bill which would require the U.S. Supreme Court to televise the arguments heard before them. I thank my Senate colleagues who are joining me as cosponsors on these important pieces of legislation.

I have supported the long overdue release of records on the assassination of President Kennedy. I support efforts and conduct oversight on a daily basis that bring information on our government's operation to the light of day. I have also long supported whistleblowers, who play a vital role in shining the light on waste, fraud, and abuse.

By reintroducing the SEC Whistleblower Reform Act, I am working to ensure whistleblowers who report possible violations of our Federal securities laws are fully protected, whether they take their concerns to the SEC or to someone in their company. My office has worked with whistleblowers and groups protecting their rights for decades. It is an essential part of our work. As Agencies all too often resist turning over the information we need to do our jobs, whistleblowers fill that gap with firsthand accounts of potential wrongdoing. To those whistleblowers: You are true patriots.

Corruption is a problem in our own government, but it is also a global problem. I support the rights of whistleblowers everywhere in their efforts to bring sunshine to corruption and aid people in their rightful quest to govern themselves.

Finally, I have been a long-time supporter of the False Claims Act. Since 1986, when I led the effort to update the False Claims Act, that law has helped the government recover \$72 billion in taxpayer money from fraud and likely saved billions more by deterring would be fraudsters. The False Claims Act is a tool by which we can—and must—hold fraudsters accountable.

That is why I also reintroduced the bipartisan Administrative False Claims Act again this Congress. That legislation raises the statutory ceiling on claims that can be handled with administrative procedures from \$150,000 to \$1 million, expands the number of Justice Department officials who can review these claims, and allows the government to recoup costs for inves-

tigating and prosecuting these frauds. The legislation makes pursuing fraudsters more efficient.

We need to take all possible steps to let the sunshine in. If we do, we will have a better and more accountable government that serves the people as it should.

NOMINATION OF ERIC M. GARCETTI

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, last Congress, I spoke of my strong opposition to the nomination of Eric Garcetti to be Ambassador to the Republic of India. I opposed the nomination due to the serious and credible allegations that he enabled sexual harassment and racism to run rampant in the Los Angeles mayor's office. When the nomination expired, I had hoped President Biden would recognize his egregious mistake, believe the victims, and change course.

President Biden failed to do so. Indefensibly, at the same time the Biden administration decries sexual harassment and racism, it has now twice nominated an individual to represent our country abroad who has enabled those very same disgusting acts. Accordingly, I continue to oppose Garcetti's nomination and ask this question: What will it take for the Biden administration to believe the victims? That same question should be posed to every Member in the Senate that is considering voting for him.

During my career, I have prioritized protecting victims of sexual harassment and abuse. In 2005, I cosponsored the Violence Against Women Act. That bill provides vital aid to the Justice Department's Office on Violence Against Women and to law enforcement to protect victims of sexual harassment and abuse. Last Congress, I cosponsored bills introduced by Senator GILLIBRAND to protect and defend victims of sexual harassment and sexual misconduct. I cosponsored resolutions introduced by Senator FEINSTEIN to raise awareness of sexual assault. These include the Ending Forced Arbitration of Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment Act of 2021, the Military Justice Improvement and Increasing Prevention Act of 2021, the Speak Out Act, the Campus Accountability and Safety Act, and a resolution supporting the goals and ideals of National Sexual Assault Awareness and Prevention Month.

This Congress, I have sent several bipartisan letters to the Department of Justice seeking information regarding sexual misconduct by Bureau of Prisons personnel and inmates against staff. With Senators DURBIN and PADILLA, I met with the Bureau of Prisons Director to further investigate sexual misconduct and discuss reforms to enhance prevention, reporting, investigation, prosecution, and discipline of these matters.

With respect to Mayor Garcetti, I have made clear to my colleagues and